

In addition, it is entirely unclear whether the program is actually fulfilling its purpose of reducing the maintenance backlog on forest system lands. The GAO states that "the Forest Service does not have a process for measuring the impact of fee demonstration expenditures on reducing the deferred maintenance problem. In addition, the GAO found that the Forest Service has yet to reliably estimate its deferred maintenance needs. Why would Congress continue to renew a program through an appropriations rider when the beneficiaries of the program don't know to what extent it's working, or even to what extent it's needed?"

It is time to end the Forest Service's abuse of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program, but this appropriations bill perpetuates the abuse by again extending the program, this time by more than a year.

Finally, this bill negates a federal court's decision that Native American tribes have a right to a full accounting of their own trust monies and assets. I find it hard to believe that this Congress would support an appropriations rider that amounts to an unjust taking of property without just compensation or due process of law.

Last year this House overwhelmingly voted to strip a similar provision that would have kept the Department of Interior from conducting a complete accounting of the Indian trust fund. Rectifying the historic mismanagement of the Indian trust fund is one of the most critical issues facing Native American tribes, and is simply a matter of justice. This appropriations bill will surely delay the resolution of the Indian trust fund accounting for years.

This Interior appropriations bill conference report woefully under-funds wildland fire-fighting and hazardous fuel reduction projects. In addition, it extends an unwarranted recreation tax on the American people, and denies Native Americans a full accounting of their trust accounts. For these reasons I urge my colleagues to oppose the report.

ACKNOWLEDGING MASTER SERGEANT DENNIS TAKESHITA'S 37 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE IN DEFENSE OF OUR GREAT NATION

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my deepest mahalo and aloha to Master Sergeant Dennis Takeshita of Hawai'i as he retires from an illustrious career spanning 37 years of tireless and dedicated service to our country.

Master Sergeant Takeshita's service to our great nation began in 1966, when he received a commission in the United States Air Force Reserve upon graduation from the University of Hawai'i, and went on to serve on active duty until 1972. Shortly after his discharge, Master Sergeant Takeshita joined the Hawai'i Air National Guard and served for 30 more years, earning numerous citations and awards for his professionalism and service.

Throughout his long career, he served in the Vietnam Conflict, the Kosovo Campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Noble

Eagle, and Operation Joint Forge. He also served the people of Hawai'i both during and after Hurricane Iniki, which ravaged the Island of Kaua'i and parts of O'ahu, earning him the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Of course, as with all great men, he owes a debt of gratitude to those who supported and nurtured him throughout his life. Master Sergeant Takeshita's father, Lawrence K. Takeshita, his mother, Frances M. Takeshita, his daughter Alison and son Brian have been there to lend their support. They are immensely proud of him and his successes during his military career.

Serving one's country is a selfless act. I commend Master Sergeant Takeshita on his commitment to our country. His patriotism, loyalty and courageous leadership are the embodiment of the Air Force Core Values. And, of course, his island home is deeply proud of him.

I close by saying to Master Sergeant Takeshita: aloha, on a well-deserved retirement, and I wish you the very best on your future endeavors.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JAMES RICHARDS

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a sad heart that I rise to pay tribute to the passing of a great man from my district. James Richards, a native of Western Colorado, recently passed away at the age of 69. James dedicated his life to public service and to the challenging legal profession. I am honored today to bring his contributions to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation.

After graduating from Western State College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History-Political Science and English in 1955, James went on to law school at the University of Colorado, receiving his degree in 1960. Upon passing the Colorado Bar, James briefly served as Colorado's Assistant Attorney General, before becoming a legislative assistant and executive assistant for Senator Peter Dominick.

James proved his versatility and multifaceted talents throughout his distinguished career. James held positions as the Assistant US Attorney in Denver, the Chief of Buffalo, New York's Organized Crime Strike Force, and the Vice President of the Capital Legal Foundation. His stellar career of public service attracted the attention of President Reagan when he was nominated and confirmed as Inspector General to the Department of Energy in 1981, and Inspector General to the Department of the Interior in 1985. James' appeal reached across partisan lines as President George H. W. Bush and President Bill Clinton asked him to continue in his position until he chose to retire on March 31, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, James Richards was a dedicated man that selflessly served his community and country, and I am honored to pay tribute to such an industrious public servant. His lifetime of service is an incredible model for America's youth. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family during this time of bereavement.

EXTENDING THE TERM OF THE FOREST COUNTIES PAYMENTS COMMITTEE

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, the Forest Counties Payments Committee was created by Congress in 2000 to make recommendations and report on certain payments to counties. Perhaps most important, the committee was charged with monitoring and submitting a report on payments made under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act (Pub. L. 106-393), also known as "County Payments" legislation. But the Committee and the payments were created by different pieces of legislation and were erroneously set to expire at different times. This bill will correct that error and extend the authorization of the Committee so that it expires with the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act.

County Payments legislation has provided rural counties in the West with some level of economic certainty following the precipitous decline in timber revenue from federal land. These payments have been critical for education funding in rural school districts that were once timber-dependent. In addition, payments have been used for road maintenance, successful community policing programs, vital search and rescue equipment, noxious weed control, collaborative forest health projects, and the restoration of important fish habitat, just to name a few benefits.

The committee submitted its Report to Congress on County Payments legislation in February. The report provided invaluable information about the implementation of the County Payments legislation, and recommendations for reauthorization. Unfortunately, Congress has yet to act to reauthorize this important law. As Congress prepares to reauthorize it, hopefully in the next year, the Committee's expertise and advice on the law will be vital to ensuring Congress acts in the best interest of those in need of County Payments funding. Approving this bill to authorize the Forest Counties Payments Committee throughout the duration of the County Payments law will make sure that happens. I urge the bill's adoption.

THE HEALTHCARE EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues in the introduction of our proposed Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act, a bill that will address the glaring disparities in health care of our minority populations.

While significant advances in health care have been made, it has been empirically demonstrated that minority populations disproportionately lack access to quality health care. For example, minority groups are less likely to

have health insurance and are less likely to receive appropriate health care services. These communities are also significantly underrepresented in our health care workforce.

I am fully committed to the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in health care access, quality, and in our health care workforce, because we all deserve equal treatment when it comes to our health. Additionally, a full investment in health care will improve the economic well-being of our Nation.

For these reasons, I am an original cosponsor of the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act. This bill will reduce racial and ethnic disparities and improve the health care for minority communities by: expanding health care coverage, removing language and cultural barriers, improving workforce diversity, improving data collection, creating and funding programs that reduce health disparities, promoting agency accountability, and strengthening our health institutions that already serve our minority populations.

I am grateful that one vital component of this bill recognizes the late Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink by creating a Health and Gender Research Fellowship program in her name. This fellowship program, which will examine and research gender and health disparities, is an appropriate tribute to someone who is so well remembered for her work in education policy and known for her beliefs in social and economic justice.

I commend the work of the Democratic Leadership in both chambers not only to bring the issue of health care disparities to light, but to address this national concern firmly and directly. I further appreciate the leadership's willingness to work with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Native American Caucus to ensure that our respective communities are included in this legislation. I especially appreciated the opportunity to assist in efforts to ensure that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were specifically included.

As the Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act will provide true health benefits for all, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELLEVILLE, WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 125th anniversary of the Belleville Public Library, in Belleville, Wisconsin. Since 1878, the Belleville Public Library has been providing an invaluable service to the community.

The Belleville Library opened its doors on December 14, 1878 when a local businessman, Henry Story, donated a collection of 133 books. The library's collection has grown over the past 125 years to an impressive 20,000 items, serving the community with print materials, audio books, videos, and CD ROM products. Belleville residents are also fortunate to have access to the library interchange network, a consortium of South Central Wis-

consin libraries that operate a shared automation system providing access to over 2 million items.

A public library is a strong component of a democratic society. Providing an equal opportunity for its residents to learn and grow is just one of the many functions a public library serves. In the library's 125 years of service, the Belleville Public Library has provided programs which foster learning for all within the community. The library has consistently encouraged learning through programs catering to all members of the community including summer reading programs for children, book discussions, and biweekly story hours.

For 125 years, the Belleville Public Library has recognized the vital importance of free access to information in a democratic society. I wholeheartedly believe that access to information allows everyone in a community to prepare themselves for the future, experience personal growth, and to perform the civic duties encouraged of all citizens in our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today and join the residents of Belleville in honoring the impressive 125 years of service from the Belleville Public Library.

TRIBUTE TO COACH ROD SMEDLEY

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Coach Rod Smedley, former Head Football Coach of San Bernardino Valley College. Coach Smedley is an individual of great distinction, and we join with family and friends in honoring his remarkable achievements and years of dedicated service to the Inland Empire.

Coach Smedley is an exceptional individual who has not only devoted his life to helping the San Bernardino Valley College community but has also been an important pillar of support for the student-athletes of the college. His kindness and passionate spirit render him a vital resource and a beloved member of the college community.

For the past 26 years, Coach Smedley has dedicated himself to serving the college and achieving a remarkable level of achievement. As Head Football Coach, he guided the San Bernardino Valley College Wolverines to five Bowl Championships, including three consecutive wins between 1995 and 1997, seven Football Foothill Conference Championships, and the highest winning percentage of a Junior College football coach in the Inland Empire. Coach Smedley has also led the Men's and Women's tennis teams to a combined total of seven conference titles. He has been an integral contributor to the management and administration of San Bernardino sports, as well as an active participant and positive influence on the lives of many college students.

In addition to these contributions, Coach Smedley was twice awarded the honor of California Community College Football Coach of the Year and awarded the Foothill Conference Football Coach of the Year four times. Most importantly, under his guidance, Coach Smedley has seen more student-athletes receive scholarships to four-year schools than any other Junior College coach in the Inland

Empire. He has received the highest possible evaluation of his profession for integrity and performance, and has taken a proactive approach to leadership in the college community.

Through his participation in countless activities, Coach Smedley has exhibited kindness, humility, and a deep resolve to ameliorate all aspects of San Bernardino Valley College, so it is only appropriate that we honor him today with his family and the residents of the Inland Empire.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we salute Coach Rod Smedley. We express sincere admiration that he is being honored for his incomparable accomplishments and hope that others may recognize his good works in the community.

TRIBUTE TO RONNIE WILLETT

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a remarkable man from my district. Ronald Willett has dedicated his life to the betterment of the people of Pagosa Springs, Colorado and this nation. On October 2nd of this year, Ronnie announced his retirement from his position with the Pagosa Springs Sun Newspaper. For over four decades, Ronnie has worked tirelessly to keep the people of his community well informed. It is my honor to call the attention of this body of Congress, and this nation, to Ronnie's many contributions.

Ronnie moved to Pagosa Springs in 1944, where he was a standout player on the Pagosa Springs football team. After graduating from high school, Ronnie joined the United States Navy in 1954. In the Navy, he served his country honorably and achieved the rank of Petty Officer First Class.

Upon leaving the military, Ronnie went to work for the Pagosa Springs Sun in 1962, where he quickly became an accomplished newspaperman and was instrumental in the exponential growth of the newspaper's circulation. Ronnie used his position with the newspaper to take an active role in the community. Over the years, he donated a multitude of printing jobs to various community projects and volunteer groups.

Ronnie's contributions to the citizens of Pagosa Springs reach far beyond his work with the Sun. In the 1960's, he was a member of the Jaycees and helped numerous youngsters build soapbox racers. Currently, he spends his time as a dedicated member of the Fleet Reserve Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and the American Legion.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a privilege to pay tribute to a man who has spent his life serving his fellow Coloradans and this nation. Ronnie's selfless dedication to his community and country is truly admirable. On behalf of the citizens of Pagosa Springs, and a grateful nation, I would like to thank Ronnie Willett for his service.